

Bill Rea ? Vacation ramblings

I'm on vacation this week, but I'm still working. I work when I'm on vacation. That's the way things work with workaholics like me. If nothing else, I am consistent.

This column was started Saturday night, while my wife was watching the hockey game, which the Leafs lost 6-1 to Ottawa. There is only so much of that a person can take, so I finally asked Beth if she couldn't find something else that was on.

What she found, after only a little bit of channel hopping, was a debate between some of the Republicans seeking to be the next President of the United States.

The fact is pickings were a little slim. There were no good movies on. We were away from home for the weekend, and we did not take any of our DVDs north with us. We could have, but Beth decided not to. She bought me the set (all seven seasons) of Hill Street Blues for Christmas a year ago, and we just got through scattering Phil Esterhaus's ashes. But we left them at home (I mean the discs, not the ashes).

So we ended up watching Donald Trump and the rest of them go at it.

Politically. I am a conservative, so I should rightly be cheering for one of these guys. The fact is the only one who came close to impressing me was Jeb Bush, and he didn't get very close. For roughly the last year, I have been convinced that Trump is a clown, and my mind has not changed. The only thing that worries me is he might actually get elected. I believe in politics, the only thing worse than a clown is a dangerous clown, and I do believe Trump thusly qualifies. I am still convinced the only person benefitting from his candidacy is Hillary Clinton.

I think observers like me have been keeping an eye on Marco Rubio, senator from Florida, for a number of years, just as we watched Barack Obama in the years leading up to him getting that job he currently enjoys. I watched Rubio the other night, and was disappointed, and not for the first time. For one thing, could somebody kindly give that guy a lesson in how to tie a necktie. The knot in the tie he was wearing looked terrible. If the guy is entertaining thought of leading the free world, he's got to be able to do better than that.

It didn't take long until I had had my fill of these folks. The election is still about nine months away, and both the Democrats and Republicans will be picking their respective heroes sometime in the summer. We'll be hearing lots more about these jokers, so I saw no reason to spend excessive amounts of my vacation time dealing with them.

I tuned out, resolved to wait about 24 hours for the Super Bowl to come on.

The fact is I wasn't too impressed with that either. I fact, I fell asleep during the fourth quarter. Beth nudged me awake with the words ?Denver won.?

I wanted to watch the Super Bowl, even if I had no real cheering interest in the game. At the start of the match, I was hoping Carolina would win, for absolutely no good reason. I only really get interested in the game if the Steelers of Pittsburgh are playing, and that was not the case this year.

Many years ago, I read the late Howard Cossell's assessment of the annual spectacle, making great use of the word ?hype.? Like so many people who followed sports, when Cossell spoke, I listened. I'm one of the few who admits that too.

I remember the first Super Bowl some 50 years ago. I was just a little kid then. My parents hosted a Super Bowl party, and it's been about 40 years since I've seen anyone on the guest list.

There were other Super Bowl parties in the years that followed. In my high school years, I was fortunate to associate with the lot of Steeler fans, and we were also lucky enough to be around people who were not. That meant betting action was not too hard to come by. I made a few bucks in those days.

One of my best friends in my high school days was a devout Minnesota Vikings' fan. He carted around a big binder crammed with Viking stats. His team made it to a couple of Super Bowls during those years and lost every one of them. My friend died several years ago, and never saw the Vikings win the big one. And I know for a fact that he didn't live in Canada when the Leafs won the Stanley Cup. That's okay. He lucked out in a few other areas. He did pretty well in the time he was given.

There were other good times associated with the Super Bowl, and a few bad ones.

I was in first year university for Super Bowl XII, when Dallas played Denver. I attended Brock University in St. Catharines. I remember I went home for the weekend, but made a point of getting back to school in time for the game. Good thing too. I was pulling for Denver, and my late father was something of a Cowboys' fan. I was still his dependent in those days, don't forget.

I got back to my room in lots of time to get to one of the TV lounges to watch the game, and the room was packed with Bronco fans, meaning I was in good company.

History records that Denver stunk the joint out that day. Dallas won easily. There were a lot of four-letter words tossed around the

TV lounge that day. That's one of the reasons that to this day, I have a hard time backing Denver in any game. That was a really big let-down.

But there was Super Bowl XXXII (that's 32 for those of you who are not familiar with Roman numerals). My employer at the time was a passionate fan of the Green Bay Packers, and they were heavily favoured to knock off the Broncos. My boss was desperate for betting action. He was applying lots of pressure, and I was a lot less than keen.

?Patrick,? I remember telling him. ?Denver couldn't beat Green Bay in a Super Bowl if Green Bay forfeited? (those were my very eloquent words).

But it is also reality that you sometimes have to accommodate the guy who signs your paycheque. If nothing else, my mother did give birth to a realist.

?Okay,? I finally said. ?Twenty bucks on Denver.?

Patrick and I shook on it. I won that bet.

Patrick may have been many things, but he could not be accused of being a bad sport. There was a big grin on his clock when he handed me my winnings a few days after the game.

I think that was the last time I ever bet on such an event. There is certainly sound logic in the expression ?quit while you're ahead.?

For me, it's enough to just watch the game, have Beth watch the Half Time show, and even fall asleep if I want to.

I was on vacation, you know.

